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ABSTRACT

"Stonehill Writes" is an example of an in-house Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) journal that records what is being written and how it is being written by administrators, faculty, students, and alumni. Published at Stonehill College, a small liberal arts college with a student body of 1600 and a faculty of 107 full-time teachers, the journal is instrumental in answering questions individuals or departments have about writing processes in different disciplines, and in creating interest and participation in the WAC program. Each issue focuses on one particular theme such as writing-to-learn, writing published by students, how to teach specific types of writing, the writing processes of various faculty and administrators, and the critical essay (how to teach it and its applications). (A copy of "Stonehill Writes" is attached.) (KEH)

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Your Own In-House Writing Journal: A Source of Bricks for Building

Virginia G. Polanski

How can you facilitate sharing and generate a sense of community among a faculty too busy to meet? How can you have ready access to your faculty's writing and teaching activities when you are preparing workshops or consulting one-on-one or even teaching your own classes??

For Stonehill College, a small liberal arts college with a student body of 1600 and a faculty of 107 full-time teachers, the answer came in the form of an in-house WAC journal--Stonehill Writes.

Looking for a vehicle to meet the previously mentioned needs when I came to Stonehill two years ago, I decided to record innovative cross-curricular writing and teaching ideas in a short publication. This short publication could be distributed among busy faculty who have little time for meetings and it would preserve ideas for future use.

As a result, during these two years, we have published six issues, each featuring one of the following themes:

writing-to-learn activities
writing published by students
how to teach specific types of writing
the writing processes of various faculty and administrators
the critical essay (how to teach it and its applications

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As these issues have been produced, I have found them helpful as building blocks in the WAC program. First of all they provide a place to record choice ideas and activities. And the thematic focus of each issue provides easy reference for future use.

When I meet with individuals or departments with questions about writing in their own discipline, I can usually point to an article in Stonehill Writes which will answer or partially answer these questions and to a bibliography of references for further information on the same topic. I can draw an article by a math professor for faculty members teaching in quantitative areas who think that writing is not appropriate for their disciplines. I can draw one by a foreign language teacher for foreign language faculty who think that they cannot profit from Writing-Across-the-Curriculum workshops. I can find a rationale for including essay questions on exams in content disciplines such as biology. I can point to a whole issue describing successful writing of students for the outside world for faculty who think that the students will never learn to write. And I can quickly find the philosophy and practice of the WC tutor for those who are afraid she will write their students' papers for them.

I can also find data for presentations which I am asked to give for faculty and student groups. Recently, I used a questionnaire from Stonehill Writes to encourage Evening Division faculty and students to analyze their own writing

processes. I then relayed descriptions of the writing processes of various faculty as expressed in this same issue to illustrate my talk. This group was surprised to see how differently each writer approached writing assignments. But they were more surprised to see the differences among the successful writers on the faculty. One writing professor claimed to be outliner. A religious studies teacher claimed she rises at 5:30 each morning to meditate and then writes what she has to say quickly at the end of the week. She adds that she becomes annoyed with observers who comment "You write quickly." The executive vice president claimed that he begins each homily he preaches as priest with a text not of his own choosing, that he frequently finds this text doesn't say anything to him the first time he reads it, and that it takes him all week to find something to say to his Sunday congregation. I could see the students in my audience identifying with his situation. I could also see them identifying with him jotting down words as they came to him as he worked on his assignment and forming them into clusters and ladders until he had a meaningful outline. Still another professor claimed he needed a support group to assist him in focusing information which he knew well to meet the needs of a journal which wanted to publish it. As the group identified with these experiences as expressed in Stonehill Writes, they gained insight into their own composing differences and problems and hopefully will develop confidence in struggling with their own writing.

In addition, I can recommend articles from Stonehill Writes as readings for College Composition students. Students can identify with the faculty just mentioned and with a part-time instructor who hears voices when he is writing--the voices of previous teachers and other authority figures. (And I quote)

> "Run-on!" one yells. "Frag!" shouts another. "You're being redundant. Too wordy," as I push onward. From the deepest overcrowded cerebrum an obnoxious, goose-like creature screeches, "Awk!" . . . it is a wonder anyone can write a sentence with such distractions.

Using William Perry's metaphor, he refers to these voices as a committee and suggests ways to control the chair.

In the near future, I expect to be able to offer faculty a picture of the writing which alumni do on the job from an issue of Stonehill Writes, more ideas for using writing in quantitative areas, and a variety of ideas for reviewing and evaluating student writing. Already two members of the WAC Committee are adapting a questionnaire designed by John Harwood of The Pennsylvania State University to meet our needs and we are looking for alumni to write short individual articles about the writing they do on their jobs.

How do I get these articles? I keep my eyes and ears open. And I go after people who have working ideas. Sometimes I start with ideas which I think will be helpful

to others and sometimes I start with a need and look for people with ideas to meet it.

As I move among the faculty and visit them in their offices and hear them participate in meetings and workshops, I try to identify working ideas. Then I ask these faculty to write for thematic issues: writing-to-learn activities, methods of teaching certain types of writing. Following an all-day workshop with an outside consultant, I identified faculty who were putting his suggestions to work in the classroom. Then I had these faculty conduct mini-workshops for their colleagues. Next, I will invite all of these people to write about their experiences for Stonehill Writes. Since one of these workshop leaders teaches in a quantitative area, I put forth extra effort and attracted ten faculty teaching in quantitative areas to his workshop. I attended and took notes on their discussion. Now, I am inviting them to describe their experiences using writing in their classes for Stonehill Writes.

As various faculty approached me to inform me that students can't write, I began thinking about all the students on campus who were already writing for the outside world. Some students were writing for the local papers in response to classroom assignments. Some were writing advertising as part of internships. One intern had written an article for a trade journal and still another was editing a newsletter for a bank. Journalism interns had assignments with local papers. Business students were already

consulting in the community and writing their recommendations. With a little effort, I tracked down faculty who were encouraging this successful writing and asked them to write.

Already Stonehill Writes has become a desirable place to publish, and one article from it has been expanded for publication in The Writing Lab Newsletter.

As our faculty continue to write and share, we will continue to build our program with our own homemade bricks. jobs.

Now, let's look through one issue:

Note the theoretical background in the editor's letter.

Note the various articles and comment.

Note the questionnaire at the end.

Stonehill Writes

NEWS FOR AND ABOUT WRITING IN ALL DISCIPLINES

Stonehill College, North Easton, MA 02357

Volume 2, Number 2
Winter 1989

This issue of Stonehill Writes is dedicated to the memory of Father Eugene Green (1944-1989) who for the past decade encouraged Stonehill faculty in all disciplines to teach writing as a process and as an art.

Dear Colleagues:

During the past two decades, researchers have observed writers who were in the process of writing, interviewed writers who had just finished writing, and asked writers who were about to write to speak their thoughts into a microphone as they wrote. Then they have analyzed this data to determine how writers compose and to find ways of assisting writers in the development of their writing skills.

Richard Beach found that college freshmen could be divided into revisers and nonrevisers (1). Linda Flower found that good writers used successive drafts to transform writing which expressed their ideas into writing which is meaningful to an intended audience (2). Sondra Perl found that unskilled writers began editing almost immediately and became so involved in this editing that they could not get their ideas written down (3). Carol Berkenkotter found that a publishing writer whom she studied used an elaborate network of planning, drafting, editing, and reviewing as he composed two articles and an editorial (4). Jack Selzer found that an engineer whose writing he studied used distinct planning, arranging, writing and revising activities while writing on the job, but placed more emphasis on planning and arranging than on revision (5).

While these researchers were finding that variations in the composing process were related to the writer's experience as a writer, familiarity with content, and purpose for writing, George Jensen and John DiTiberio were noticing relationships between composing processes and personality styles as identified by the "Myers-Briggs Types Indicator." For example, their observations showed that extroverts generated ideas from talking, interviewing and freewriting and needed oral feedback to see need for revision. In contrast, introverts thought best when working alone, planned carefully and clarified their ideas before writing, and then revised their own work (6).

From these findings, we can see that writers have different ways of turning out pieces of writing. With these differences in mind, I have asked faculty and administrators of Stonehill College to share descriptions of their own writing processes. My intention is that we will become aware of the validity of a variety of ways of dealing with a writing task. And as a result, we will be sensitive to these differences in assigning writing tasks and in coaching students to respond to these tasks.

-Virginia Polanski, editor
The Writing Program

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Think Before You Speak (Write)

Grace Donovan, S.U.S.C.
Department of Religious Studies

At times, in a writing class I have asked the students to describe the room where they write. One semester they may read first about the rooms that serve various writers, including Professor Frank Phelan of Stonehill. Another time, after completing their drafts, the class may compare their descriptions with those of other writers. For me, it is easier to write about the time that I think. During the academic semesters I settle into a comfortable, armless chair about 5:30 A.M. With a cup of coffee beside me and the anatomy of treetops before me, I spend the first hour of the day preparing for the Sunday when my turn will arrive to speak at our worship service.

Like my office, the living room appears cluttered. Scrawled notes and books surround me. Having majored in history, I tend to inquire into the background of a text. I somewhat agree with a recent speaker on campus who described himself as a "detective." (Though I could not agree with his considering a detective and a writer as opposites). Through the research of theologian-historians I familiarize myself with the setting of the readings from the Lectionary for that week. Then I spend time, often protracted, in personal absorption and application of the message to my own life and to our locale.

When inspiration comes, I move to possible implications for the students who listen each Sunday to one of us from campus ministry. Usually, some happening in the news, some remark of a friend, a remembrance from the past, a selection from reading, theater, or film moves me to embroider that event as an introduction or imagine an incident that relates to the theme. After seven or eight such mornings, I eventually sit before a terminal to transfer the thought-out idea to written word. It is somewhat annoying when someone observes: "You write quickly."

To what does such a process lead? A five- to seven-minute oral reflection. Out of the hundreds of students who participate in our Sunday liturgies, two or three may make an affirming statement about the homily. Worshippers from the local area who join us are more vocal in their response. Yet for me as thinker, dreamer, writer, speaker, those morning hours of preparation are a gift leading me to begin the day reflectively and peacefully. Those sixty minutes at dawn encourage me to welcome another day at Stonehill with colleagues and students. Who benefits the most from such writing? Undoubtedly, the writer.

When Two Heads Are Better Than One

David Lyon
The Writing Program

I write for a living, and most of the time I write with a partner. We find collaboration second nature, yet every editor we've worked for asks, with some temerity, the same series of indirect questions. They want to know which one of us <u>really</u> does the work.

We're not alone. We interviewed authors Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris for a magazine article about collaboration, and they told us the same tale: No one wants to believe that a piece of writing can be the product of two minds instead of one. There's a silly idea afloat in our culture that "creative" efforts--including writing--must be individual accomplishments.

Ridiculous.

Most of us who teach composition try to emphasize that writing is a form of communication: The essay exists as much between two people as between two pages. But we often forget to tell our students about the communication that shapes the message behind the writing. It seems too simple to say, yet it is profound: language is inevitably shaped through a process of dialogue.

Sometimes the interchange is only imaginary--a healthy self-censorship in the service of communication. The student writer weighs what he will commit to paper against what he fears his professor will say. It is not an altogether bad impulse. After all, the technical writer shapes a users' manual through an imaginary dialogue with the prospective user. The business sales writer selects her phrases with an eye (and ear) to how the customer will respond.

Our students generally understand that form of dialogue very well, and they should: they've been practicing it since they entered school. We give it the force of edict, reminding them to write for a particular audience. But we don't always communicate to them the form of dialogue that creates ideas rather than censoring them.

Ideas don't exist in isolation. We state them in sentences with verbs--and verbs imply action. Thinking and communicating are active processes, moving from one place to another. They are, inevitably, dialogues. A scholar composing an article for a professional journal, for example, maintains an intellectual dialogue with the body of knowledge in her field. A scientist reporting the results of an experiment establishes the conclusions of the research in the context of what is (and isn't) known in his field.

Perhaps the purest form of this dialogue that students can recognize is the late-night dormitory bull session--the unbridled give-and-take of often spurious concepts from which some surprisingly sophisticated (and often incorrect) ideas will arise. However intellectually unrigorous such sessions may be, they are a model of the process of idea development.

Even the solitary writer engages in this form of dialogue. Most habitual writers will testify that they write to find out what they really think. We look at our words on the page or screen and evaluate the validity of them as we progress. But working alone has its drawbacks. Those who find writing an arduous task become quickly wedded to the words they have wrenched from the difficult silence of a blank page or screen. Once they have labored to state

the concept, they are not inclined to push that particular rock back up the mountain.

Co-authors, on the other hand, have a much easier time of it. Ideas grow quickly when they are batted back and forth between two minds, and the exact language to best express them is easier to locate when more that one person is looking for it. Editors make a terrible mistake when they assume one collaborator or the other does the bulk of the work on a co-authored piece of writing. If the article, report, or essay is good, then it is because both writers have pulled evenly in double harness. And pulling together is much more fulfilling then mumbling alone in the darkness.

Co-writing doesn't necessarily progress quickly, of course. It merely yields a more developed product. Two people working together will inevitably disagree at some point; resolving those disagreements requires patience, mutual respect, and a sense of humor.

Oddly enough, those same traits are essential to any civilized discourse, and it is no mean feat to get our students to develop them. It always amazes me how quickly my students develop these abilities, however, when they are paired to write one paper together, with both team members getting the same grade.

I Am an Outliner

Virginia Polanski
The Writing Program

I am an outliner. I like to make little outlines which have potential for infinite expansion. I like to make lists. I like to start these lists, convert them into outlines, and let them lie. Then when I am riding, walking, washing, ironing, I think about my outlines and add details. I whip my outlines out of my briefcase or handbag in the car, in waiting rooms, at home and quickly record a new idea. Then I sit at my desk and play around with the items in these outlines until I have created a "work of art."

But before I start my outline, I design a title, struggling with each word. The title must be perfect before I begin. Otherwise, I would not have a clear sense of direction. And without a clear sense of direction, I would not know what to write. Creating a title reminds me of a farmer choosing a mark at the opposite end of a field so that he can keep his eye on it when plowing the first furrow in order to make it straight. I need my title to keep my train of thought straight.

Research tells me I am in the minority of the population--the majority like to freewrite.

History tells me that my tendency to outline accounts in part for my success in writing courses during my student days. Before current research in the composing process showed that different successful writers approach writing with different preliminary activities, teachers and texts insisted that

students outline and show their outlines before they wrote. In retrospect, educational historians assume that the majority of those teachers and textbook authors were outliners inflicting their own style on all their students. I still remember classmates who "cheated" by writing their papers first and their outlines last. I didn't have to "cheat" because my style was compatible with the style demanded by the system. This compatibility paid off in the reward of high grades and these rewards fostered further success.

My professional interest in reaching all of my students in my writing classes tells me that I must be sensitive to a variety of approaches to the writing process. I must design assignments in such a way as to allow different students to approach the same assignment differently. I must talk about different approaches so that students understand that different approaches are acceptable. And I must encourage students to try approaches other than those which come naturally to them so that they can develop a variety of options to give them flexibility when approaching different kinds of writing assignments.

Recently I have been trying some free writing. When I see how difficult free writing is for me, I see how difficult outlining must be for freewriters.

Reporting for the Newspaper

Robert F. Richards, instructor
Stephanie White, student
The Journalism Program

Researching and Writing News Stories

Robert Richards

Students in journalism 101 and 102 spend considerable class and out-of-class time developing their news skills, including news gathering, interview techniques, story organization and lead writing.

Students follow two tracks in the course. The first is the actual news gathering, which includes fact collecting and interviews. The second is the organizing of facts, with considerable emphasis on writing a tight, concise news lead.

Emphasis on news gathering is placed on first-layer reporting or eyewitness accounts whenever possible. However, second- and third-layer reporting and the need to maintain strict documentation guidelines are explained in detail. Since attribution is vital to the creation of a balanced, fair report, students are given short lead writing drills several times in class during both semesters. Class time is judiciously spent with students to write solid leads, but also to develop the

body of their story by clarifying any details which appeared in the lead. Regardless of the class drill, emphasis is placed on writing from fact and avoiding the use of ornate language which can alter the meaning of the story. Students are reminded of the importance of being fair and maintaining their credibility as a journalist at all times.

Students are urged through role-playing interview drills in class to draw up lists of discerning questions to ask during a mock interview. Interviewing techniques are explained and utilized during the mock drills. Considerable emphasis is placed on over-researching any story before the facts are sorted out and judged for print. Students are shown in class how to make determinations of what should and should not be used in their stories. The success of fact gathering depends so much on the student's ability to conduct sound interviews. Sources and the development of such are considered vital to a successful journalist.

Throughout the course, students are given examples of different styles of reporting such as feature writing, sports writing, obituary writing, editorials and opinion pieces. Students are asked to read published articles and critique them for assignments. This helps familiarize the students with varied writing types and styles. During the second semester, we attempt to have the student develop his or her own style, stressing sentence structure, shorter paragraphs and the use of transitions.

Preparing for a Reporter's Position

Stephanie White

The knowledge I gained through my journalism course at Stonehill College prepared me well for a summer internship as a reporter at the Brockton Enterprise.

One of the exercises we spent a lot of class time working on was writing leads. I learned what information goes into a lead and how to work that information so it sounds interesting, catches the reader's eye, and makes the reader want to continue with the story. When I worked at The Enterprise, I did not need to be taught how to write a lead; I could start right in covering news.

Several times Prof. Richards would give the class a list of facts related to a story but he would present them in no particular order. Our job was to write the story from the list of facts, similar to the way a reporter writes a story from her notes. It was difficult to decide what facts were most important at first, since almost everything seems crucial to a beginner. As the semester went on, my stories improved, the decisions became easier, and the writing was smoother. When I applied for my job at The Enterprise, I was given a test and one section of the test was a list of facts to be compiled into a story. My classroom experience helped me write a good story which led to my being hired and helped me during the summer with stories I covered. This experience also taught me to put the least important information at the bottom of the story, in case it had to be cut off for space considerations.

Another exercise we did in class was hold a questioning session, much like a

press conference. For example, one time nine students were assigned the positions of Supreme Court Justices that had recently voted to override Roe vs. Wade, and the rest of the class questioned them on their decision. Exercises like these taught us which questions to ask and how to think quickly "on our feet." I found this especially valuable when interviewing at The Enterprise, particularly when interviewing over the phone, since your credibility as a reporter is lessened if you forget to ask someone a question and you have to call them back.

I also found the class exercises when we all read our own stories out loud helpful, since I could see how other students worked the same information into a very different story. Through observing other people's writing styles and listening to Prof. Richards' comments, I learned how to tighten my own writing to say the same thing in less space, which is an important consideration when writing for a newspaper.

Overall, I found the experience I gained through my journalism classes very helpful while working as a reporter. I do not think I could have obtained the job without this background, and I know my performance would have been much worse without these courses.

Writing Poetry

Jim Chichetto, C.S.C.
The Writing Program

First, why do I bother to write a poem at all? I write a poem (or anything, for that matter) because I have something to say and wish to communicate that inner knowledge through the medium of language, preferably the metaphor. This exercise of communication enables me to live my life more authentically against the pressures of what I believe to be a very violent and disordered world.

Second, how do I write a poem? I start by keeping a daily journal. This journal has all sorts of things in it: possible images for a poem, dialogue for a novel (I have written three unpublished novels), reflections for a homily, excerpts from readings, etc. All these spontaneous, hand-written entries have commerce with or deal with my obsessions and concerns: God, relationships, compassion, war, love, hate, etc. Later (when I have free time) these improvised entries enable me to put something down on typewriter paper for the first draft of a poem. Once these entries are extracted from my journal and put on typewriter paper I start to cut away the needless phrases from them, or bones, as it were, for the flesh of the content. That is, I look for the meat of these entries, the preferential images and symbolic connotations that nourish my imagination and will enable me to create something new about a given topic that absorbs me at the time. When I think I have the right images, I go about trying to

arrange the lines in a certain order until I can get the sound effect and meaning that I want. Then I write the poem from beginning to end to feel its flow.

Let me demonstrate this process by using a fairly simple poem entitled, "Silence In A Chilean Prison." The imprisonment and eventual expulsion of Holy Cross religious from Chile in the 1970's and 80's and the continual suppression of free speech in Chile prompted me to write this poem. The poem first appeared in Carin (1985), then later in America in 1986. The editors of America selected this poem out of all their entries that year for inclusion in the new Anthology of Magazine Verse and Yearbook of American Poetry, 1986-88.

First I will give you the journal entry, then the first draft, then the final draft.

JOURNAL: far away from here you are a leader, not Pinochet! witness like a pilot for other fish.
lines across the head and through the eyes, the shadows (torn) of jail bars drag over the bottom of your life.
Prisoner of broken dreams, ruptured, marked off.
Dreams pulled under the throat, under your path, no longer speak.
You crouch alone like light in the water, curled, wave-strung.
The guards with their words hit you, your lighted cigarette, your heart, your bones.
You believe too much-------
like a fleshy flap of fish, like a fish's chin's.....
Life is underneath now like coral rubble and your eyes chisel-sharp pierce the black night.
Pinochet, his suit like moist seaweed, drably patterned. Wicked looking?? Teeth like fleshy lips balk at you. That general, dark like a third class fish. His feet like snake heads.

FIRST DRAFT:

Far away from here, you are a leader, Bending like a light ray in the water.
Dreams pulled under your throat no longer speak.
You crouch alone in your cell.
The shadows there drag over the iron bars through your eyes and over the bottom of stones.
The guards strike at everything--your cigarette, your hands, your bones because you believe too much.
Life is like rubble here but your eyes pierce the night.

And that General Pinochet, you must kill him with your silence.

FINAL DRAFT:

Far away from here, you turn dark
and crouch alone like a light ray
bent in the water.

The shadows of the iron bars across your head
and through your eyes drag over the
bottom of stones.

Dreams pulled in under your throat
no longer speak.

The guards, dropping out of their chairs, strike
at everything, hitting your lighted cigarette,
your hands,
your bones,
because you believe too much.

Life is like coral rubble, petrified,
and your eyes underneath, chisel-sharp,
pierce the black night.

And that General--
you must kill him with your silence.

Writing Historical Fiction

Patricia Fanning
The Writing Program

I enjoy the process of researching as much as I enjoy the process of writing. Consequently, in writing historical fiction, the prewriting activities of selection and research are as satisfying as putting pen to paper.

Regional history, which is my specialty, is an exciting and much neglected field. There are countless untapped resources in the dusty archives of local historical societies and the forgotten corners of public libraries. These records make inspirational reading for anyone searching for a subject.

One time when my co-author and I were casting about for a topic, we were attracted by the story of one man, George Willett (1870-1962). He was an

incredibly powerful businessman and fascinating character.

Once research began, however, it became apparent that this was much more than one man's story. At the turn of the century, Willett had singlehandedly reorganized and redesigned the government as well as the cultural and social activities of the town of Norwood. Within twenty years, however, he was financially ruined and considered mentally incompetent. The proposed historical feature on George Willett became a twelve-part newspaper series on the history of the town.

There were corporate records, family histories, photographs and memorabilia at the local historical society. That, as is usually the case in regional history, was only the tip of the iceberg. More information was gleaned from old tax records, lists of voters, and town reports. A multi-volume, typed trial transcript was unearthed in the basement of the county courthouse and, most rewarding of all, people shared their memories of Willett and the other participants in our saga. The story began to take shape and to take life.

Often the difficult part is knowing when to stop researching and start writing. I usually reach a saturation point. I am so immersed in the material that the people and events become overwhelmingly immediate. I can't hold it in any longer and the story nearly tumbles onto the page.

After a period of time, I go over what I've written, revising, noting gaps in the narrative, smoothing rough edges, throwing out material that, while fascinating to me, doesn't advance this particular story.

Finally, after yet another incubation period, the fine tuning and editing begins. This activity, much like the prewriting research, could go on forever if I didn't put a stop to it.

Ultimately, I let go. Shortly thereafter, however, that bit of information or amusing anecdote that just wouldn't fit into this story comes to mind. It could become the basis for an historical article or another work of historical fiction. And the process begins once again.

On Writing a Homily

Robert J. Kruse, C.S.C.
Executive Vice President

Writing a homily differs from most other writing in that it starts with a text that is not chosen by the writer but assigned by the Church. What is more, the text is taken from the Holy Scriptures of the Christian people. It is the writer's task to reflect upon the text in such a way that it touches and illuminates the lives of those who hear it. Still, much discretion is left to the homilist. This is evident from the fact that confronted with the same text a hundred preachers will reflect upon it in a hundred different ways.

I start by reading the text over and fixing it in my mind. When I first read it a text often leaves me empty and speechless. It says nothing of interest

to me and I have nothing of interest to say about it. Sometimes it is necessary to return to the text many times. Until I discover a message for me in the text, I cannot begin to write a homily. Eventually, something in the text strikes a responsive chord within me. As soon as that happens, I know it and I know what I want to say.

I then jot down in haphazard fashion anything that comes to mind as potentially useful for communicating the message the text has delivered to me. This might include personal experiences or the experiences of others, historical events, literary allusions, theological considerations, and even particular phrases or expressions which come to mind. Next, I put this jumble of material in order by grouping similar content together under the same letter of the alphabet. Thus, I might wind up with four or five entries under A, another three or four under B, etc. What doesn't fit with anything else I discard as too marginal for my purpose.

In writing the homily I also discard much of the material under A, B, and C, selecting only what I judge most powerful in communicating the test's message. I like to make the same point several times using different materials to do so. This resembles picking up an object and training it over and around so as to see it more completely.

Finally, I like quietly to speak aloud what I have written in order to test how it sounds. This usually leads to some changes in the wording for sake of clearer thought and of sweeter speech.

Teaching Composition in Foreign Languages

John Golden
Department of Modern Languages

My experience as a foreign language teacher has only strengthened a belief I acquired as a student of French, German, and Russian: namely, that composition is the stepchild of foreign language instruction. We divide our discipline into the four skills--listening, speaking, reading, writing--and sometimes we add a fifth "skill"--culture. "Writing" in the context of the foreign language class, though, bears little resemblence to the subject I taught as a T. A. in Freshman Composition at Cornell University.

In the early courses of a foreign language, writing is, in fact, just another way to drill and test grammar. It consists of supplying in writing grammatically correct forms. My first-year German text--the most popular in the country--does include suggestions for composition at the end of each chapter--but nothing more, as though students could leap from drilling the accusative case to writing coherent paragraphs. At the higher levels, writing still means grammar, as revealed by the common course entitled "Advanced Grammar and Composition." "Writing" in these advanced courses is also often, though not openly, really translation.

Now, grammar and translation both

contribute, indirectly, to improving skill in English composition; neither, though, is composition. I would like to sketch one technique that I use to lay the foundation for teaching composition in the foreign language, and to describe more fully a sample unit from my German composition course.

All of my students, from the first week of the first year, write a blue book entry in the foreign language about once a week. I respond to their entries, using an appropriate level of language and including something in my answer that can serve as a point of departure for their next entry. The pedagogical benefit of our getting to know one another through this process is important, but it is only a fringe benefit. The real gain is that the students have become accustomed to using the language to communicate. I never correct errors in the blue book; if the grammar is so bad that I don't understand, I simply write "I don't understand this." Students seem to respond well to the blue book--especially since they know that 10 substantial entries are 10% of their final grade.

I have taught--though not yet at Stonehill--Advanced Grammar and Composition to students in their sixth semester of college German. My model for the course is the Freshman Composition courses I have taught. We cover selected topics from Crews and Brooks/Warren: finding the true subject, unity, coherence, and emphasis, paragraph functions and structures, opening and closing paragraphs. The model must be modified, of course, most obviously to account for the relatively smaller vocabulary available to students in the foreign language and for the relatively greater number of grammatical errors.

Here's how we go about writing a composition in the unit "Work in Germany." First, we spend a week reading, discussing, and learning vocabulary from 3 short texts: one on "The World of Work" (a survey of various professions, ranking them in terms of salary, respectability, etc.), one on "Labor and Management" (a rather dry piece, full of passive voice and jaw-breaking Teutonic polysyllabics), and one on "Women and Work" (an account of official policy and the discrepancy between it and reality). We are then ready to begin to write our essays. And we do it exactly as we did when I was teaching Freshman Composition. We brainstorm; as students spit out words, phrases, and ideas, I jot them quickly on the board. In the foreign language class, this step helps to compensate for the lack of vocabulary available to each individual student, since we have a larger stock of words as a group. Then we look for connections between the jottings; my role at this stage is to draw circles and arrows. Then we try to label each group of connections; these labels serve as our "topics." We then try to frame some "true subjects" for each topic, carving out a narrower area within it. And then we try to form a "thesis sentence" for each of our true subjects.

At this point, students go home and either list four supporting points for one of the thesis sentences or find another thesis sentence and list four points for it. If the class is small, we spend the next class hour--as a group--commenting on our points. If the class is too large to treat each student's work during the hour, we just don't meet the next time. Instead, I meet with each student individually for ten minutes or so.

After this round of input, students write a good first draft. On the draft, I correct grammatical errors and make additional suggestions. The additional suggestions usually speak to strategies

appropriate to the kind of paper the student has written. The "Work in Germany" topic, for example, usually generates a preponderance of comparison and contrast papers. My hope is that fear of grammatical error has not impeded the student's ability--desire, even--to communicate. I try to get them to consider correcting grammatical errors in German as a normal part of the process of revision. Students then do a final draft, about which my comments focus on the substance of what they've written.

This method, unlike the "grammar and translation" method, reinforces directly English composition skills. It represents one more way that foreign language study contributes to the general educational development of the student.

Order Please!
(Or, I Can't Sing, But Just Watch Me Edit)

Paula M. Bozoian
The Writing Program

Song has always been (in my opinion) the most immediate, and successful, means of communicating ideas, information, or emotions. I'm not at all musical, however. I was a permanent member of the third clarinet section throughout junior and senior high school. In the chorus I sang the part assigned to those around me, never my own. As a graduate student I wrote and published poetry, and it was then that I learned to enjoy, and to trust, the sound of my own voice.

It is now a decade later, and I have been asked to explain how I go about editing, a practical skill I developed along the way--and a skill, I should interject, far more likely to feed and clothe a family of four than the production of clear, concise and thoughtful verse.

Most writers I know delight in the creation of a manuscript and resist its revision. As an editor, my sentiments are just the reverse. I find drafting a paper difficult and unrewarding; editing, however, gives me a sense of control and purposefulness that I never feel during the production of a first draft. When I edit, the territory is familiar. I know where I am, and I know where I'm headed.

The most important thing I do as an editor is listen. I read a manuscript aloud with no other purpose in mind, at first, but to make the piece shorter. Irrelevant and distracting anecdotes are eliminated immediately; they were included only to keep me interested in the assignment. I concentrate on finding a relatively clear path from initial proposition to thoughtful conclusion. If I can't follow my own line of thinking, no one else will be able to.

When I get stuck on a troublesome section, my first strategy is to create some distance between myself and the problem. (A week's worth of laundry usually does the trick.) If I'm really

stuck, I look for a new audience. I invoke the persona of J. L. McManus, a friend from my Chicago days known for his emotionless prose. "How would McManus say it?" I ask myself. My six-year-old son can be helpful, too. "Let me explain something to you," I say as he groans and rolls his eyes toward the heavens. "Does this make sense to you?" A new audience, even an unwilling one, inevitably suggests new language; the problem solves itself.

After I've read through the manuscript and eliminated all the obvious junk, I review the overall structure of the piece. What did I intend to do when I started? Did my purpose or focus change? If so, can I revise the beginning to match the ending? Or, do I have to rework the ending? I look and listen carefully for linkages between one paragraph and the next. If the focus is about the shift, I check for some signal to that effect for the reader.

Once I've played with the organization and structure to my satisfaction, I read the manuscript aloud from start to finish. I pay close attention to how the words sound. If I stumble as I read, so will my reader. I read exactly what is on the paper, checking to see that the signals I've given in the form of punctuation are clear. For the most part, I can tell if I've done a good job of revising my own work. If I can't, I turn the manuscript over to someone whose writing I enjoy for his or her comments. I incorporate those suggestions (if they seem appropriate), run the piece through a "spell checker," turn it in, and forget all about it.

For me, editing is the most rewarding part of the writing process. It's the only place where I can exercise some real control over my product. I cannot carry a tune, but I can create a coherent essay. I do not excel in mathematics, but I have learned to use language in a precise and careful way. Editing is as close as I will ever get to making music; it is close enough for me.

Writing With A Support Group

Peter Beisheim
Department of Religious Studies

Last year four faculty members formed a writing support group which met weekly. Our common intent was to offer encouragement and constructive criticism regardless of the nature or developmental stage of a particular writing project. The following observations are the author's alone and are not meant to represent those of the group as a whole.

When the group started meeting, I was confronted with a deadline by one of the editors of New Catholic World who had requested an article on justice and peace for the September/October issue on Catholic Higher Education in America. Consequently, in one of our early meetings, I distributed and explained in great detail the overall structure and content of my article. The group

encouraged me, however, just before writing the first draft, to read an article "Justice and Peace Education: Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow" published in 1986 by Sr. Alice Gallin, a friend and professional colleague. The structure of her article, her choice of church documents and some of her conclusions drawn from these documents were very similar to my own. Concerned about duplication, I returned to the group whose discussion aided me in the decision to shift my focus and emphasis in the article.

After working through several drafts by myself, I presented the third to the group. With a deadline looming, the members were very gracious, supportive and conscientious in responding very quickly. Each was also very clear that acceptance or rejection of their comments would be at my discretion.

When I sat down to write the final draft, I had in front of me a clean copy of the article and three copies critiqued in different colors: red, green and black. I had forgotten what it was like to have my work marked up in "glowing" colors. Overall, the comments indicated that the article needed a stronger opening, sharper definition of specific terms and acronyms, two transitional statements, clarification of a chronology of events, expansion or condensation of sentences, and a more optimistic ending. The majority of the comments concerned readability and style, but one especially valuable comment concerned a specific area of content. If a particular suggestion was expressed by two or more colleagues, I made a change. If, however, a certain change was suggested by one individual, the decision became one of deciding whether or not a change would be merely substituting someone else's preference for my own.

As a result of this interaction with my colleagues, I met my deadline. Later I learned from the editor that no editorial changes were necessary, although the editorial staff did replace my title with their own (for the better, I might add). I found the experience of working with a writing support group enjoyable and obviously rewarding. I would join another group and heartily recommend the experience to others. But, I would warn that support groups whether for writing, dieting, or keeping fit are not everyone's "cup of tea." For people with a good deal of pressure in their lives, commitment to the group can be additional pressure despite the feelings of congeniality and the ensuing camaraderie.

Two weeks ago, a friend, who is a faculty member at Assumption College wrote: "Your article in New Catholic World (September/October) was very well done, and has been useful to several of us here as we look toward a Peace Studies Program." My only regret about this experience was that I did not use my first footnote to acknowledge the contributions of the group to my success. To correct this oversight I wish to extend publicly my thanks to Jack Broderick, Sr. Grace Donovan, and Fr. Eugene Green.

The Writing Process and Use of Word Processors

Mohammed Shibli
Department Of Business Administration

When Virginia Polanski asked me to write about the writing process, I froze in my tracks. Not being conversant with jargons that the "writing people" use, my next reaction was to read up on the subject, or cry "wolf," or try a combination of both. But being the good teacher she is, V.P. helped me out of my dire straits. Soon I was asking myself, "Who's afraid of Virginia . . . ?" I also found that the writing process is something I'd been using all my life without realizing it.

I never had any formal training in writing or the writing process. The few papers I wrote during my college years were basically reviews of literature or were based on published articles on some given topic in economics or business. Therefore, when I had to write "original" pieces for the first time during my graduate work, and especially for my dissertation, I often would face a dilemma: to write or to think first. I would often spend days trying to write one page of coherent prose, only to end up tossing it in the waste-paper basket.

Gradually I realized that my basic stumbling block was my yearning (like that of all other writers, I presume) to be perfect when I sit in front of the typewriter. This caused me to spend an inordinate amount of time playing around with words in my mind before "committing" them to black and white--always fearful that on review my own words might laugh at me and that I might have to retype the piece. Consequently, I spent hours making sure the arrangement of words was right, and I was 100 percent sure I was typing what I wanted to say exactly the way I wanted to say it before casting it in concrete.

However, once I was introduced to word-processing software and began exploring its various features, things began to change for me. First of all, the conflict between the speed at which my mind can think, (or race, as my wife teases me) and my fine motor skills, i.e. my writing speed, became less of a problem. I could let my fingers race almost as fast as my mind, capturing the words as they flashed on my mental screen. In the language of dialectics, word-processing technology helped me overcome the contradictions between the forces of production (i.e. my thought and finger combo) and the mechanics of production (i.e. the keyboard).[1]

Now, with the help of my word processor, I start to write just for the fun of it, trying to capture my thoughts as best as my typing skills will allow. Oftentimes, I do not necessarily have a profound thought to start with: in fact I usually start with just a little thread and spin words around it. Because the word processor takes care of the mechanical aspects of writing, I can stop worrying about them as well as about "correctness." The spelling and the syntax can be wrong, and/or the sentence may be incomplete. I can even write half a sentence or jot down just an idea to be expanded upon later.

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[1] With due apologies to my dialectical materialistic friends who would in all likelihood be apalled by my vulgarization of these terms.

After a section has been written and I go over it, no matter what my first reactions on the form and content are, I usually feel relieved that I have made a beginning. I also look forward to editing it because criticizing (even my own work) is more fun than creating! This experience contrasts with my writing experience in my "pre-high-tech" days. Back then, I guess, I was in the habit of getting everything right the first time around using my words like bricks. However, the structure I would build with these bricks didn't always look like the architecture I had in my mind. Now I try to build the overall structure in one sweep and then later fill in with individual bricks.

The best part about writing with a word processor is the infinite number of ways I can arrange and rearrange the words and paragraphs and even completely "remodel" the paper. While there may be a cost in that I am never satisfied and every time I look at the paper I have an urge to change, and change, the additional benefits to me make it worthwhile. Also, because changes can be made effortlessly, I do not mind showing my papers to anybody who is willing to read them and offer comments.

Oftentimes, when I am writing a sentence, I may grope for the right expression and get frustrated by my inability to capture my mood or sentiment in words. When I am using a typewriter, this can cause writer's block often lasting a few days. When I am using a word processor, I simply use a "filler" or a substitute and come back to focus on this area more intensely after I finish the section. By then the right phrase will probably suggest itself. Even if it does not, I know that during the period when the paper is being reviewed by others it will. Quite often, when I sit back and have the whole piece, albeit with a lot of bumps, the proper words and phrases come much more easily.

If I may draw an analogy, I might say the process is like that followed by a sculptor. In the first phase one has the broad outline, and then in the next phase one chisels away for the finer details. For a writer, obviously the process does not always end with the second phase. With a word processor, the writer can "afford" to keep on changing a text and changing it until a product is nicely polished.

Questionnaire

Virginia Polanski
The Writing Program

The following questions are designed to give you insight into your composing style. Answer them carefully and honestly, but don't spend a lot of time on any one. Your first inclination is probably your most accurate answer.

___ 1. Would you rather (A) discuss your ideas with people before writing or (B) start writing by yourself?

___ 2. Do you pause (A) because you can't think of anything to write or (B) to plan your next strategy?

___ 3. Do you outline (A) before writing or (B) after?

___ 4. When you revise your early drafts, are you more likely to (A) reorganize main points or (B) add details to support main points?

___ 5. When you write, do you like (A) to jump right in or (B) to plan first?

___ 6. Would you rather write about (C) things which you have experienced with your five senses or (D) impressions, hunches, things you may imagine?

___ 7. Would you rather (C) receive detailed step-by-step instructions for a writing assignment or (D) be given an opportunity to be original?

___ 8. Would you rather be given (C) a specified framework for a writing assignment or (D) general instructions from which you can create your own goals?

___ 9. (C) Are you careful about spelling and punctuation when you write or (D) do you wait until later to correct these items?

___ 10. When you revise are you more likely (C) to proof read or (D) to add examples?

___ 11. Would you rather (E) categorize facts and details or (F) discuss values and interpersonal relationships?

___ 12. Would you rather (E) analyze the plot of a movie or (F) write about your personal reaction to it?

___ 13. Would you be more proud of (E) a paper which conveyed what you wanted to say or (F) one which interested its readers?

___ 14. Are your first drafts likely to lack (E) personal examples or (F) clarity and organization?

___ 15. Are you likely to (E) follow an outline or (F) let your thoughts flow when writing?

___ 16. Are you more likely to choose (G) a problem you know you can solve or (H) one which interests you?

____ 17. Are you likely to (G) finish each task you begin or (H) leave a number of tasks unfinished?

____ 18. Are you likely to (G) limit your topic quickly or (H) leave your topic flexible and open to new information?

____19. (G) Do you set goals and stop at intervals to analyze and revise them or (H) do you dive right in and try to include everything possible?

____20. When revising are you likely to need to (G) expand to clarify or (H) cut out material in order to sharpen your focus?

* These composing styles have been related to the personality styles of the "Myers-Briggs Types Indicator" by George Jensen and John DiTiberio in College Composition and Communication, October 1984.

This questionnaire was presented in a paper at the College Composition and Communication Conference in New Orleans, ERIC ED 273 980, 15 March 86 13P.

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* copy preparation and layout by Carol Johnson ('89)